

## Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 PM-05 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10  
NSAE-00 L-03 NEAE-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 SP-02 EB-08  
EUR-12 IO-13 /079 W  
-----057197 171316Z /41

P 170945Z JUL 78  
FM AMEMBASSY SANA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5372  
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SANA 3479

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, YE  
SUBJ: POLITICS, POLITICS, POLITICS

BEGIN SUMMARY: PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY IS EXPECTED TO ELECT  
ALI ABDALLAH SALIH PRESIDENT TODAY. AHMAD HAMDANI MAY  
BE NEW PRIME MINISTER. END SUMMARY.

1. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY AT LEAST A DOZEN SOURCES THAT  
PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY WILL MEET TODAY, 17 JULY, TO ELECT  
ALI ABDALLAH SALIH PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND COMMANDER  
IN CHIEF.

2. ELECTION WILL COME AS NO SURPRISE IN SANA. BY  
CONTRAST, I WAS QUITE SURPRISED THIS MORNING TO BE  
SUMMONED BY MINISTER OF ECONOMY, AHMAD HAMDANI, ON  
URGENT BUSINESS WHICH TURNED OUT TO BE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT  
ALI ABDALLAH SALIH HAS ASKED HIM TO BE NEW PRIME MINISTER  
IN PLACE OF ABD AL-AZIZ ABD AL-GHANI. QUESTION WHICH  
HAMDANI ASKED US WHETHER US GOVERNMENT SUPPORTED  
ABD AL-AZIZ ABD AL-GHANI TO EXTENT THAT IT WOULD NOT  
WANT TO SEE HIM GO OR WOULD NOT SHIFT ITS SUPPORT  
TO HAMDANI. I REPLIED THAT US GOVERNMENT DEALT NOT  
WITH PERSONALITIES BUT WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS AND WOULD  
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WORK WITH HAMDANI, IF HE WERE NAMED PRIME MINISTER,  
IN SAME DIRECT, OPEN AND SUPPORTIVE MANNER AS IT HAD  
DEALT WITH OTHER YEMENI PM'S IN PAST. I ALSO MADE  
POINT THAT US GOVERNMENT DID NOT EXPRESS ANY  
PREFERENCE FOR CANDIDATES TO OFFICE IN YEMEN, BUT DID  
LOOK TO ALL YEMENIS TO MAKE SURE THAT PERSONAL OR  
SOCIAL OR TRIBAL OR ECONOMIC DIFFERENCES AMONG THEM

DID NOT PREVENT FORMATION OF STABLE AND STRONG GOVERNMENT.

3. HAMDANI WENT ON TO SHARE SOME THOUGHTS HE HAD ABOUT POSTS FOR PARTICULAR PEOPLE. HE SAID HIS PROGRAM WOULD BE TO REVIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN YEMEN BY MERGING MINISTRY OF ECONOMY AND CPO. HAMDANI SAID THAT GOVERNMENT MUST DO EVERYTHING IT CAN TO APPEAR TO BE BUILDING STRONG NATIONAL ECONOMY, PARTICULARLY SINCE IT WOULD BE FIGHTING A CONTEST WITH SOUTHERNERS FOR LOYALTY OF ITS OWN CITIZENS AS WELL AS CITIZENS IN SOUTH. HAMDANI SAID, IN FACT, THAT TASK OF GOVERNMENT WOULD BE TO WORK WITH ALI ABDALLAH SALIH TO PREPARE FOR WAR WHICH MIGHT BE FORCED UPON THEM BY SOUTH. LOYALTY AND VIGOR WOULD BE HIS WATCHWORDS.

4. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT FIRST STEP OF NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD BE TO INVITE SOVIETS TO LEAVE.

5. HE THEN SAID THAT FIELD OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AS WELL AS NEEDS OF NEW GOVERNMENT, REQUIRED MUCH BETTER EXPLANATION AND HE INTENDED TO PURGE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION OF "85 PERCENT OF ITS EMPLOYEES WHO ARE COMMUNISTS OR LEFTISTS." HE EXPECTED TO PUT BASINDWA IN CHARGE OF INFORMATION AND THUS, HE SAID, SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF DEVELOPMENT AT THE SAME TIME.

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6. HE INSISTED THAT TRIBES WHICH SUPPORTED HIM FOR PM, BOTH BECAUSE OF HIS HAMDANI BACKGROUND AND HIS CONNECTIONS WITH GHASHMI, WERE DETERMINED TO OUST ASNAJ BUT HE, HAMDANI, WAS DETERMINED TO KEEP ASNAJ IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. HAMDANI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT ASNAJ DID NOT LIKE HIM BUT THOUGHT THEY COULD WORK TOGETHER IN THE FUTURE.

COMMENT: HAMDANI WAS RUSHED AND WE SPENT ONLY ABOUT 20 MINUTES TOGETHER. I THANKED HIM FOR GIVING US A PREVIEW OF EVENTS BUT LEFT WONDERING IF ALI ABDALLAH SALIH HAD REALLY MADE THE COMMITMENT WHICH HAMDANI DESCRIBES. HAMDANI EXPECTS AN ANNOUNCEMENT TODAY SO WE SHALL PROBABLY HEAR SOMETHING VERY SOON. HAMDANI IS SURE THAT MANTLE IS FALLING ON HIS SHOULDERS. HE CITES EXASPERATION OF ALI ABDALLAH SALIH WITH ABD AL-AZIZ ABD AL-GHANI WHO, HE SAID, IS SIMPLY UNABLE TO TAKE ACTION ON ASNAJ'S SUGGESTION TO FORM CAMPS FOR THE THOUSANDS OF MILITARY DEFECTORS FROM THE SOUTH. HAMDANI ALSO CLAIMS THAT ALI ABDALLAH ASKED HIM, HAMDANI, RATHER THAN ABD AL-AZIZ, TO WORK OUT A LEAKPROOF

ECONOMIC BOYCOTT OF SOUTH YEMEN TO "CUT OFF ALL THE  
BENEFITS THEY HAVE ENJOYED THROUGH US IN THE PAST."

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FM AMEMBASSY SANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5373

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SANA 3479

ONE POTENTIAL PROBLEM IS THAT HAMDANI IS US CITIZEN  
WHO HAS LITTLE EXPERIENCE AS A POLITICIAN IN YEMEN.  
HE WAS BORN AND RAISED IN ADEN, LEFT WELL AFTER THE  
1968 REVOLUTION AND SERVED FOR AWHILE AS HEAD OF  
MUHSIN AL-AYNI'S OFFICE. HE THEN WENT TO THE STATES  
FOR STUDIES WHERE HE TOOK A PH.D. IN STATISTICS AT  
WESTERN MICHIGAN. HE WORKED FOR AWHILE THERE BUT  
CAME BACK TO YEMEN ONE YEAR AGO TO OPEN BUSINESS OF  
HIS OWN WHICH, WITH KUWAITI MONEY, HAS RESULTED IN SOME  
VERY NOTABLE SUCCESSES: A HOUSING PROJECT, ESTABLISHMENT  
OF A NEW BANK, A MOTEL AND HOTEL PROJECT, AND SOME  
EQUALLY LUCRATIVE BUT SMALLER DEALS. HIS KNOWLEDGE OF  
ECONOMY OF YEMEN IS, NEVERTHELESS, QUITE LIMITED  
AND HIS INTELLIGENCE, DESPITE HIS ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS,  
HARDLY COMPARES WITH THAT OF ABD AL-AZIZ OR SOME OF THE  
OTHER TECHNOCRATS WHO HAVE WORKED SO SUCCESSFULLY IN  
THE FIELD OF ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT. HAMDANI IS,  
HOWEVER, REFRESHINGLY DETERMINED TO GET THINGS DONE  
QUICKLY, WHILE ABD AL-AZIZ ABD AL-GHANI IS AT THIS  
POINT ALMOST PARALYZED BY ANXIETY AND FATIGUE.  
RANSOM

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## Message Attributes

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